

Presidential Message

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In reading the inaugural essays in the H-Diplo series “Learning the Scholar’s Craft,” I have been struck by the authors’ recollections of the ways that associates—Army personnel officers, friendly classmates, a young editor, a vibrant teacher, a generous aunt, a gracious correspondent, a dog-shooting document keeper—affected their scholarly trajectories. My career as a historian has likewise been shaped by an array of people. The document keeper I recall most vividly let me read her mother’s scrapbooks while sitting on the sofa in her living room. I have no idea how she treated the neighborhood dogs, but given that she fed me cookies, I suspect that they had nothing to fear.

Looking back at the significant encounters that made me the historian I am today, a pattern emerges: many crucial encounters occurred at SHAFR conferences. On my winding trajectory from women’s and gender history to the study of imperialism, colonialism, and globalization, SHAFR associates played pivotal roles at every twist and turn. I have gone to panels keen to hear one specific paper only to have my mind set ablaze by another, and I have gotten leads on archives, books, articles, presses, teaching strategies, and departmental practices during conference coffee breaks. I am a bona fide introvert, the kind of person who would have a hard time deciding what to do if given a choice between a night on the town or one in the library, reading century-old reports on sewage dumping in the Great Lakes.

And yet I look forward to the SHAFR conference every June, for that is where I hear the papers and roundtable remarks that change the way I understand the world; where I meet the people most likely to set me off on paths that I never would have found on my own. That is where people known to me through their written words have become conversation partners, so that when I read their work I hear their voices speaking from the page. And that is where I feel like I am part of something larger. I always leave feeling inspired.

So if you have not already marked your calendar, purchased tickets, and booked accommodations for the June conference, be sure to do so soon! Thanks to the Program Committee (co-chaired by Julia Irwin and Gretchen Heefner), Local Arrangements Committee (co-chaired by Gunter Bishof and Jana Lipman), Conference Consultant Amanda Bundy, Executive Director Amy Sayward, and hundreds of paper proposers, this conference will be a memorable one. To get a sense of the exciting conversations that await in the Crescent City, consider the first five panels on the draft program: “The Geography of International Organizations”; “Empires and Intersections: Race, Religion and the Atlantic World”; “An Empire of Refugees: The United States’ Cold War Policy and Refugee Legacy, 1959-1995”; “Asia after Vietnam: Enduring Patterns



and Transformations in U.S.-Asia Relations”; and “Narrating Empire from Below.” As these topics suggest, there will be something for everyone, and conference-goers will be faced with some tough choices on which sessions to attend.

The NOLA conference will make the most of its location, with an opening plenary session on World War II at the National World War II Museum and a Friday plenary on the Caribbean World prompted by the conference site. Options to sign up for a walking tour on Friday and a visit to the

Whitney Plantation (notable for its focus on the lives of enslaved people) following the conference will provide opportunities to learn more about the history of this port city from its colonial origins through the catastrophic events of Hurricane Katrina.

I would also like to flag the social gathering to be hosted by the Committee on Minority Historians (CoMH) after the Friday plenary. CoMH Co-Chairs Chris Fisher and Perin Gurel are eager to hear your thoughts on advancing diversity and inclusion in SHAFR, and this event will provide a dedicated opportunity for you to connect with them and other Committee members. I very much hope that all SHAFR members will join the CoMH in its important work. Even if you cannot attend this gathering, you can draw in scholars from underrepresented groups; reach out to newcomers at SHAFR events; further diversify SHAFR leadership through self-nominations and the nominations of colleagues; and continue to spread the word on our conferences, publications, web and social media presence, prizes, fellowships, collegial community, and collective efforts on behalf of the wide expanse that is our field.

One of the luncheons at the June conference will be dedicated to archival issues. The SHAFR Committee on Historical Documentation (HDC), chaired by Richard Immerman, has long been concerned about the budgetary and other challenges facing the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) [See Richard’s essay in this issue of *Passport*]. In response, the HDC has been working with organizations such as the American Historical Association (AHA) and National Coalition for History (NCH) to open more lines of communication with NARA and advance our interest in government document preservation, declassification, and access. On a parallel track, our representative to the NCH, Matt Connelly, has pressed to make NARA a greater priority. One result of these efforts is that the National Humanities Alliance will highlight NARA concerns in its annual Humanities Advocacy Day. Because many records users have at best a limited understanding of the archival developments that will affect the next generation of scholarship and, indeed, the documentary record of our time, the Friday luncheon

will focus on archival matters past, present, and future.

Conference goers will also be interested to learn that SHAFR will meet again in Arlington, Virginia (a quick metro ride away from Washington DC) in 2021 and then in Toronto in 2022. Council selected the Toronto site from a highly competitive pool of bids. I wish to express my gratitude to all those who developed and submitted proposals. The annual conference is the central event in the organizational life of SHAFR and we are indebted to the teams of scholars who are keen to partner with us to make it happen.

Avid minute-readers will notice that Council voted in January to adopt the MemberClicks membership management system. Executive Director Amy Sayward, her assistant Faith Bagley, SHAFR IT Director George Fujii, and the Web Committee (chaired by Heather Stur) are now working with the MemberClicks staff to set up our account. MemberClicks should make it easier for you to renew your SHAFR membership (up to now, Oxford University Press has handled SHAFR memberships for us, but we will handle memberships in house with this new platform). You will also be able to set up and manage your own entry in our Experts Directory once the MemberClicks system is up and running.

Two other significant developments that came out of the January Council meeting are the creation of a Public Engagement Committee and the launch of a Task Force on the Jobs Crisis in Academia.

The Public Engagement Committee had multiple origins, including the SHAFR pre-conference workshops in 2017 and 2019 and a call for the creation of such a committee during the State of SHAFR plenary session at the 2019 conference. Kelly M. McFarland and Kimber Quinney co-chaired a task force on whether and how to proceed, and Council enthusiastically approved their proposal to establish a committee focused on bridging the gap between

academics and wider publics through means such as the SHAFR website, Twitter feed, and Experts Directory; the sponsorship of conference panels and workshops; *Passport* articles on reaching non-academic audiences; podcasts, and the cultivation of media and other partnerships. Bradley Simpson has signed on as the first chair of this committee, which is now up and running.

The Task Force on the Jobs Crisis originated with my predecessor, Ara Keys, who appointed Daniel Bessner and Michael Brenes as co-chairs. Believing that it was essential to recruit contingent faculty and precariously employed SHAFR members to serve on this task force and that such task force members should receive financial recognition for their volunteer labor, Council approved the co-chairs' proposal to offer modest honoraria to qualifying members of the task force. As noted in the January 2020 e-blast, Daniel and Michael would welcome your ideas and comments.

As these reports on SHAFR goings-on make clear, there are structures behind collegiality and chance. The first essays in the "Scholar's Craft" series draw attention to some of these larger forces and institutions. Along with allusions to war and religious persecution, they mention positive structures such as university departments, archives, presses, prize committees, and a State Department documentation project. Having served on several SHAFR committees over the years, I've had glimpses into how much hard work goes into making SHAFR a force for good in the profession. From my current perch, I am awed by SHAFR members' willingness to put aside their own research, course preps, and other endeavors to advance our collective commitments.

So here's to the seemingly chance encounters that you will someday herald in your memoirs and to the dedicated team that is laboring to produce these chances, for the larger good of our scholarly craft.

Call for Nominations

SHAFR's Nominating Committee is soliciting nominations for elected positions.

The 2020 elections will fill the following positions:

Vice President/President-Elect (1 vacancy, 1-year term, followed by a 1-year term as president and then a 3-year term on Council)

Council members (2 vacancies, 3-year term)

Graduate Student Representative (1 vacancy, 3-year term)

Nominating Committee (1 vacancy, 3 year-term)

Please submit nominations (including self-nominations) to the members of the Nominating Committee by e-mail no later than **June 30, 2020**. Nominations must include the nominee's name, e-mail address, institution (if applicable), and a statement of the nominee's qualifications. The committee particularly seeks nominations that offer specific details about the nominee's service to SHAFR and commitment to the field. It is helpful to indicate whether you have contacted the nominee about his or her willingness to serve.

Nominating Committee members:

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